

## Teacher's Directive Utterances in English Classes

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### Abstract

This research aimed at finding out and describing (1) teachers' use of the variability of directive utterances in English classes in Government Senior High Schools of Surakarta Municipality, (2) the reasons motivating the teachers' using the varieties of directive utterances and (3) realisations of implementation of politeness principles in the use of directive utterances. The data of this research are teachers' directive utterances produced in English classes and statements showing their knowledge, beliefs and experiences as English teachers. The sources of data of this research are English teachers of Government Senior High Schools of Surakarta Municipality. The primary methods of data collection are observation and interview. The findings of this research are that the English teachers (1) make use of directive utterances varying in linguistic forms and illocutionary forces, (2) use varying directive utterances to respect the students, to facilitate the students' learning, to assure quality and to assure teachers' authority, and (3) realize politeness principles in using directive utterances by means of (a) offers and requests to maximize students' benefit, (b) invitation and requests to minimize teachers' benefit, (c) compliments to maximize students' praises, (d) praises students to minimize teachers' praise, (e) solidarity expressions to maximize student-teacher agreement and (f) friendly addresses to maximize students' sympathy. The research findings may function as indicators of the teachers' professional, pedagogic, social and personal competencies.

**Keywords:** directive utterances, ethnographic research, English classes

### 1. Introduction

Indonesian government's policy insists that Indonesian language be used as the primary language of instruction in all classes. However, a foreign language may be used as the language of instruction in specific classes to facilitate the learners' learning a target foreign language. Thus, English may be used as the language of instruction in English classes to facilitate the learners' learning of English.

English textbooks for Senior High School students are written or dominantly written in English. Besides, the teachers of English of Senior High Schools are undergraduates (S1) of English (Education) Department, who have been prepared to be competent English teachers. These may lead to an expectation that communication in English classes run in English or is dominated by the use of English. In addition, these schools are invariable executors of Government's policy in education, especially in curriculum implementation, which governs the choice of language of instruction for English classes.

In his pre-research observation, the researcher found that the students and teachers of the schools above are active speakers of Javanese and Indonesian languages. So, it can be said that they are bilingual speakers speaking Javanese and Indonesian. On the other hand, the English teachers, who are graduates of English departments, are assumed to be multilingual speakers speaking Javanese, Indonesian and English. Learning English in the former level of education, the students may also be familiar with English besides speaking Javanese and Indonesian. An English class, then, may constitute a multilingual community knowing the three languages. It is assumed that, in some circumstances, the teacher and his students use the three languages as a means of communication in the classroom.

In the classroom, the teacher normally plays a central, managerial role and has the authority to direct students' classroom activities. This authority is primarily manifested in the teacher's use of directive utterances. As the class has to do activities of varying types and complexities, it is assumed that the teacher uses directive utterances having varying linguistic forms and illocutionary forces including asking, ordering, requesting, inviting, suggesting and permitting.

Teaching and learning activities in the classroom normally require teacher-students' interaction or communication, that is developed through the use of language. The classroom interaction is an exchange of ideas, rather than verbal expressions between the teacher and his students. The exchange of ideas is normally governed by the contexts in which the interaction is taking place.

Surakarta Municipality is part of Central Java Province, Indonesia. Popularly called Solo, Surakarta is claimed to be the center of Javanese culture (beside Yogyakarta), and is located in the south-eastern part of Central Java Province. It is a small town occupying an area of 44,000 square kilometres. It has 869 schools, 56 of which are Senior High Schools (Sekolah Menengah Atas/SMA). Of these 56 SMAs, eight are Government SMAs and the other 48 are private SMAs. This research was conducted in six out of the eight government SMAs, that is, SMA

1, SMA 3, SMA 4, SMA 6, SMA 7 and SMA 8 Surakarta. The researcher chose government schools due to their being invariable executors of Government policy in education, especially that dealing with the use of English as the language of instruction in English classes.

## 2. Research Methodology

This research was conducted in six government Senior High Schools (SMA Negeri) of Surakarta Municipality, a small town in the south-eastern part of Central Java Province, from July, 2012 up to April, 2013. This small town is located about 600 kilometres away from Jakarta, about 60 kilometres away from Yogyakarta and 100 kilometres away from Semarang, the capital of Central Java.

This research concentrates on the teachers' production of directive utterances in classroom interactions in English classes. So, this research concerns with Pragmatics (Searle, 1976; Huang, 2007; Thomas, 1995; Coulmas, 2005; Verschueren, 1999) This research also describes a culture (Goetz, 1984, Spradley, 1979 & 1980, Spindler, 1982, Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007), that is, everything dealing with practices and beliefs of a group of people. This research is then an ethnographic research describing the English teachers' beliefs, knowledge and classroom practices in the use of directive utterances. It concentrates on phenomena commonly known as language use, language behaviour and speech acts demonstrated by some English teachers in their classroom interactions. The utterances under study are located in chunks of discourse tied together by contexts (Cutting, 2002).

The data of this research are teachers' directive utterances (made in classroom interactions in English classes) and statements showing their beliefs, knowledge and experiences as English teachers. The sources of data are eleven English teachers of the six Senior High Schools who function as the research informants. Eight of these teachers function as both informants and teacher-models, as they provide both kinds of data. The other three informants are senior teachers who provide information about their beliefs, knowledge and experiences as English teachers.

The researcher used observation and interview as his primary methods of collecting data (Atkison & Hammerley, 2007; Spradley, 1979 & 1980; Spindler, 1982). Observation was used to collect data about the teacher's English classroom directive utterances, while interview was used to collect data about the teacher's beliefs, knowledge and experiences as English teachers. The researcher used participant observation, in which he was seated in the back of the class to record the teacher's utterances and the students' responses. However, he used passive participation as he did not get involved in the classroom activity. The interview is done after the observation to identify the teachers' knowledge, beliefs and experiences as English teachers. In both the observation and interview, the researcher used note-taking technique.

The researcher used purposive sampling in choosing his sources of data. (Sugiyono, 2010; Suwardi Endraswara, 2012; Spindler, 1982; Spradley, 1979 & 1980). He involved a number of informants who met the criteria he determined before, covering (1) five years (minimal) working experience as English teachers at the schools, (2) multi-lingual competence in Javanese, Indonesian and English and (3) willingness to get involved in the research as informants, some as model teachers to be observed. The classes involved in this research were those chosen by the appointed informants, that is, the classes the informants were scheduled to teach English. The number of informants and classes the researcher involved was determined by the extent to which the data collected had demonstrated consistent patterns and regularity in (1) the informants' use of directive utterances in English classes and (2) their statements in the interviews. The researcher decided to end his data collection after he had observed teaching-learning interaction in the fifteenth class, conducted by the eighth informant-teacher model and interviewed the eleventh informant, when he had obtained consistent data. So, the researcher had involved eleven teacher-informants and fifteen classes, using purposive sampling technique.

The data of this research consisted of informants' directive utterances in English classes collected by using observation and informants' statements made in the interviews. The researcher used theoretical judgement, prolonged observation, member check and triangulation as data validation techniques (Sugiyono, 2010). The use of interview and observation shows triangulation of data collection methods; the recruitment of seventeen informants (eleven teachers, six students) shows triangulation of data sources and the involvement of fifteen English classes in six different schools shows triangulation of situations. The regularity and consistency of the collected data of directive utterances were obtained by observing the directive utterances of the eight informant-teacher models. On the other hand, regularity and consistency of interviewees' statements were obtained by interviewing the eleven informants, including the informant-teacher models. Reference to theories and former research findings validates identification and classification of directive utterances

The researcher adopted a model of research procedure proposed by Spradley (1979 & 1980) except that some of the original steps were deleted. The procedure the researcher took consisted of only nine out of the original twelve steps. These steps covered (1) selecting informants and social situations, (2) doing observations, (3) doing interviews, (4) analyzing informant's utterances and statements, (5) making ethnographic records, (6) doing

domain analysis, (7) doing componential analysis, (8) discovering cultural themes, and (9) writing the ethnography.

### 3. Research Results and Discussion

At the average, a government senior high school in Surakarta Municipality has thirty classes, consisting of ten classes of each grade (X, XI and XII). Each class consists of 24 up to 32 students, so that each school has 700 up to 800 students. Each classroom of the schools is averagely 7x7 metres wide, provided with one door and five windows. Situated in a tropical region, each classroom is provided with electric fans and some are provided with air conditioners to comply with technological developments today in all sectors, most of the classrooms are also provided with electric appliances including TV, LCD, LCD screen and computer. The students' seats are arranged in an 'I' formation the teacher regularly taking the central point facing his class, and only in certain situations he moves around the classroom.

An average class is made up of about thirty students speaking Javanese and Indonesian and have some knowledge of English. Classroom interaction consists of teacher initiation, students' responses and teacher evaluation. Teacher talk dominates classroom interaction, as the teacher regularly initiates the interaction using verbal expressions and evaluates students' responses also using verbal expressions. The use of directive utterances of varying types dominates teacher talks, which indicates that the teacher has appropriately played his role as class manager. As a professional who are required to acquire relevant competencies, the teacher organizes his use of directive utterances for many different purposes.

The teachers believe that the best language of instruction for English Classes is English. In classroom interactions, however, the teacher's use of English covers 60 – 80%, Indonesian 20 – 40 % and Javanese around 10%, the percentage depending on average student's English competence, level of difficulty of teaching material and class situation. Directive utterances dominate teacher's talks in either English or Indonesian (about 85%). On the other hand, Javanese utterances are used only in limited frequency, mainly to refresh classroom situation. In the classroom interaction, the teacher uses various types of directive utterances and adjusts the language of instruction for certain, idealized purposes. His use of friendly directive utterances also indicates that he implements politeness principles in his classroom interaction.

#### 3.1 Teacher Use of Varying Directive Utterances

The majority of utterances the teacher produces during teacher-students interaction in English classes are of directive types (about 85%). Besides representing his managerial role in the class, the teacher's extensive use of directive utterances in English classes partly demonstrates his professional/academic competence (as an English teacher) and social competence (as a member of speech community). The teacher has clearly learnt that (1) directive utterances are formulated in various linguistic constructions and (2) varying directive utterances convey varying illocutionary forces or notions.

#### 3.2 Making use of Varying Linguistic Forms of Directive Utterances

The teachers have learnt that getting things done, the core point of directive utterances is formulated in various forms or linguistic constructions. To get their students do things to develop students' classroom activities, they make choices among various types of directive utterances. Referring to the actual utterances they produce in the classroom, the teachers make directive utterances in sentence form (consisting of a subject and predicate) and in non-sentence form (ellipsis, consisting of only some part of a complete sentence). This indicates the teachers' cultural knowledge and practices. When producing sentence-form directive utterances, they produce, either positive or negative, declaratives, interrogatives or imperatives. When they use interrogatives, they arrange Yes/No questions, alternative questions, or question-word questions. When they produce non-sentence directive utterances, they arrange ellipsis, which consist of single words, phrases or incomplete/unfinished sentences. Following are some examples.

Context : Discussing a reading text (about 'Making Invitation')..

Utterance : - *When was Shinta born?* (Yes/No Question)

- *Does Susy accept or refuse the invitation?* (Yes/No Question)

- *Now you find the word stating the acceptance.*(Declarative)

- *Does Shinta only invite Susy herself?* (Yes/No Question)

- *Find the words supporting your answer.* (Imperative)

- *What about Shinta's relatives?* (Ellipsis)

Context : Acting out. (performing dialogues before the class)

Utterance : - *Anung and Betty, come before the class.* (Imperative)

- *You act as Malin Kundang, and you as the mother.*(Declarative)

- *What do you say to your mother, Anung?*(Interrogative)

- *Will you curse or excuse your son, Betty?* (Alternative Question)

- *Do you want to change your attitude, Anung?* (Yes/No Question)

- *Any more to say?* (Ellipsis)  
Context : Talking about hobbies.  
Utterance : - *Does everyone have a hobby?* (Yes/No Question)  
- *Who has no hobby?*(Subjective Question)  
- *Do you like singing or dancing?* (Alternative Question)  
- *You tell your friends about your hobbies.* (Declarative)  
- *Tell me what you like to do on Sundays.*(Imperative)  
- *Playing or watching music?* (Ellipsis)

### 3.3 Making use of Varying Illocutionary Forces of Directive Utterances

The teachers have also implicitly learnt the concept of ‘speech acts’, that is, that by producing a language expression (locutionary act) one does something (illocutionary act) and expects the hearer to do something (perlocutionary act). In other words, they learn that behind what one says (form) is what he means (illocutionary force or notion) and what the hearer is expected to do. A single form may convey varying illocutionary forces or notions; and a single notion can be expressed in varying linguistic forms that may yet affect the hearer in varying ways. In getting things done in English classes, therefore, teachers make choices among the various types of notions that directive utterances potentially convey. They then produce actual, appropriate directive utterances with different illocutionary forces or notions, including asking, ordering, requesting, inviting, suggesting and permitting and offering. This demonstrates their cultural knowledge and practices as English teachers. Following are some examples.

- Context : Introducing a text type (descriptive text, describing people)..  
Utterance : - *Do you have an uncle?* (Asking)  
- *What is he like?* (Asking)  
- *Now, you describe your father.* (Ordering)  
- *Or describe your brother.* (Ordering)  
- *Let me give you examples* (Offering).  
- *Please use adjectives.* (Requesting)  
- *Let’s discuss the sample text.* (Inviting)  
- *It’s better you say ‘he has’ or ‘he is’.* (Suggesting)  
- *You can discuss it with your partner.* (Permitting)  
Context : Discussing a reading text (about ‘falling in love’).  
Utterances : - *Have you ever fallen in love?* (Asking)  
- *How do you feel when you fall in love?* (Asking)  
- *Now, please read the text by heart.* (Requesting)  
- *You try to answer the questions.* (Ordering)  
- *You may discuss it with your partner.* (Permitting)  
- *Now, let’s discuss your answers.* (Inviting)  
- *What about number one, Hery?* (Asking)  
- *Is it true or false, Mira?* (Asking)  
- *Would you answer question two, Mas?* (Requesting)

### 3.4 The Reasons for which Teachers Use Directive Utterances

The teachers’ use of various directive utterances in English classes turns out to be motivated by certain reasons. The types of directive utterances the teachers use are in fact consciously chosen, which shows that the teachers have idealized reasons for the choices of the directive utterances they have made. The idealized reasons behind the teachers’ production of directive utterances clearly indicate their cultural beliefs that govern the choices and use. Four reasons motivating teachers’ use of varying directive utterances in English classes are identified as follows.

#### *To Respect People/Students*

In the classroom, the teacher and the students constitute a speech community, although the teacher dominates the classroom interaction. In this community, it is the teacher, rather than the students, who intrinsically has power, as he is socially above the students. The students do not have power, as they are socially below their teacher. However, the teacher is not always happy with this situation. With his power, the teacher could get his students to do whatever he wants them to do using politeness-free directive utterances like orders or commands which clearly show his and his students’ different positions. Instead, the teacher reduces the use of orders or commands and replaces them with politeness-bound directive utterances like requests, suggestions, invitations and permissions to show that he respects his students. The result is that the teacher’s use of orders/commands and requests have similar frequency of use. The teacher’s respect to his students is realized in the following practices.

- \* Reducing the use of expressions implying students' low position (orders),
- \* Replacing expressions of 'ordering or commanding' with 'inviting',
- \* Maximizing the use of 'polite' expressions,
- \* Using friendly addresses

#### *To Facilitate Students' Learning*

For the teacher, the primary focus of his professional activities is his students' learning achievement, mastery of learning materials. Students' learning achievement complies with the teacher's teaching objective, that is, the students' mastery of teaching materials. Whatever he does, then, is done to meet his students' learning objective, that is, to gain good learning achievement. This is manifested in the teacher's use of directive utterances with the following strategies.

- \* Adjusting the use of English as language of instruction
- \* Using Indonesian Utterances for appropriate purposes.
- \* Using English and Indonesian utterances simultaneously
- \* Using Indonesian to certain individuals or groups of students
- \* Using simplified (English) utterances.
- \* Using explicit (direct) utterances.
- \* Using tension-reducing expressions
- \* Tolerating Students' conditions

#### *To Assure Quality*

In the teacher's belief, the primary goal of his teaching is students' acquisition of English, covering the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. In classroom interaction, his use of English provides his students with input, which functions as a model of English for them. They will make use of the input when they try to produce English utterances, as their output, the product of their learning, to convey their own ideas. The teacher's effort to assure quality of his teaching is manifested in the use of directive utterances with the following strategies.

- \* Positing himself as a model in using English.
- \* Using familiar classroom English
- \* Using directive utterances of asking
- \* Training the students to produce authentic texts.
- \* Allocating the use of English in English classes.
- \* Controlling students' concentration

#### *To Assure Authority*

The Teacher is aware of his position as class manager, that thus is higher than his students'. Besides, he believes that a classroom interaction which he develops runs in a formal setting. Awareness of his position as a teacher, as classroom manager and the formality of classroom setting motivates the teacher to choose and use several appropriate types of directive utterances which are intrinsically politeness-free. Following are some strategies the teacher takes to assure his authority.

- \* Using directive utterances of ordering/commanding
- \* Using utterances referring to standard English variety.
- \* Using utterances showing formal relation between students and teacher.
- \* Using directive utterances creating conducive classroom situation

### *3.5 Realizing the implementation of politeness principles*

The teacher's use of directive utterances that convey politeness may demonstrate his personal competence. Beside indicating his cultural practices in the production of directive utterances, the teacher's choices of the utterances are governed by certain idealized reasons, which show both his cultural knowledge and cultural beliefs in the use of directive utterances. In addition, the fact that the teacher consciously considers cultural aspects and personal relation with his students in classroom interaction clearly indicates his willingness to implement the principles of politeness. Following are the realization of politeness principles as proposed by Leech (1983) which may also show the teacher's cultural beliefs.

1. Using offer and request to maximize the benefit of other (students)  
(*Let me answer question 1/Would you answer question 1? for Question 1, you*)
2. Using invitation and request to minimize the benefit of self (teacher)  
(*Let's listen./Please listen for You listen*)
3. Using compliments to maximize praises to other (students)  
(*That's a good answer, Andy, for Is that your answer, Andy?*)
4. Praising other (students) to minimize praises to self (teacher)  
(*Andy's answer is better than mine for My answer is better than yours*)
5. Using solidarity expressions to maximize agreement



(You choose option b. It means you disagree with Anton's answer? That's good.)

6. Using friendly addresses to maximize sympathy.

(Mas Andy, will you come forward? For Andy, come forward, you.)

### 3.6 Discussion

To run classroom activities, English teacher makes use of directive utterances varying in linguistic forms, including complete sentences (covering declaratives, imperatives and interrogatives) and ellipsis. This shows the teacher's professional/academic competency that an English teacher is required to acquire. The teacher has learnt that getting something done, in any language including English, can be realized in varying linguistic forms, ranging from complete sentences to ellipsis. Ability to produce appropriate directive utterances of varying linguistic forms also indicates the teacher's good knowledge of English grammar. The teacher makes use of his knowledge of English grammar to produce directive utterances to run his professional job as classroom manager, responsible for providing conducive learning condition for his students.

In his professional job as classroom manager, the teacher produces various forms of directive utterances expressing varying meanings. What the teacher says in the English classroom indicates his knowledge of language (English) forms and functions. In other words, to run his professional job as a teacher in the classroom, the teacher makes use of his language (English) knowledge of forms and functions.

In his professional job in the classroom, the teacher does whatever he does to facilitate his students' learning and to cope with whatever learning problems his students have. His use of 'simplified' English utterances, Indonesian utterances, English and Indonesian simultaneously and appropriate types of directive utterances shows the teacher's pedagogic competency.

In his managerial practices, the teacher exhibits his belief that students should not be treated as low-class individuals. He is indeed always aware of his socially higher position in the classroom, yet he is always aware, too, that the students should not be treated the way low-class labours are treated. His use of high frequency requests and various polite expressions indicates the teacher's respect to his students. This is also an indication that the teacher has demonstrated good social competency.

In his classroom interaction with his students, the teacher makes use of utterances that assure his authority as a teacher, while maintaining his behaving himself as an individual. He is aware of his effort to maintain his authority, but is continuously adjusting the way he interacts with his students with emerging situations. That sometimes he treats his students as his 'partners', sometimes as his 'subordinates', sometimes as his 'lovers', sometimes as his 'patients', all shows his personal competency.

Being polite is a trait that the classroom teacher customarily demonstrates. He is always trying to talk in friendly, rather than rude, tone. In his use of utterances, he maximizes his students' benefits by means of (1) requests and offers, (2) compliments and (3) friendly addresses. He maximizes agreement with his students by means of solidarity expressions and minimizes his individual benefit by means of (1) invitations and requests and (2) praising his students.

## 4. Conclusions

Following are conclusions drawn on the basis of the current research findings presented above.

1. Teacher's talk in English classes is dominated by the use of directive utterances, primarily in English and secondarily in Indonesian.
2. The teacher's utterances vary in linguistic forms and illocutionary forces.
3. The teacher makes use of the varying linguistic forms of utterances (declarative, interrogative, imperative and ellipsis) to convey seven illocutionary functions of asking, ordering, requesting, inviting, suggesting, permitting and offering.
4. A single linguistic form of utterance can be used to convey several illocutionary forces, and a single illocutionary force can be conveyed in some linguistic forms.
5. The teacher has idealized, appropriate reasons for his use of various types of directive utterances.
6. The directive utterances the teacher has chosen to use show that he has tried to implement maxims of politeness.

The use of variable directive utterances in English classes indicates the English teacher's professional/academic, pedagogic, social and personal competencies.

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